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ABSTRACT

This essay outlines the development, present condition, and future direction of the 20,000-volume Polish research collection at Alliance College, located in Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania. Alliance College was founded in 1912 by the Polish National Alliance (PNA), a life insurance fraternal organization. In 1931 its entire library collection was destroyed by fire. The Polish collection was rebuilt and housed in a separate room beginning in 1950. In 1953 a decision was made to begin reporting its special holdings to the National Union Catalog (NUC) of the Library of Congress (LC) and, in 1961, it was decided to recatalog the entire holdings according to LC classification and subject headings. Relocation to larger quarters occurred in 1970. This was followed by a period of rapid growth due to federal grants in support of the college's year abroad program in Poland and in support of the library's independent book exchanges with Polish institutions. In 1982/83 the library received OCLC services. A total of 2,273 titles were cataloged and placed online, and the entire periodical collection was also added to the online Pennsylvania Union List of Serials. A table showing the number of titles held within each LC subject classification is provided. (Author/ESR)

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THE POLISH COLLECTION AT THE ALLIANCE COLLEGE LIBRARY IN CAMBRIDGE SPRINGS, PA: THE ORIGINS OF THE COLLECTION IN 1950, ITS RAPID DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1970'S AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE ONLINE COMPUTER LIBRARY CENTER (OCLC) IN 1982.

by

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ALLIANCE COLLEGE

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1983

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BACKGROUND ON ALLIANCE COLLEGE

What is a Polish research library of 20,000 volumes doing in the farmlands and forests of northwestern Pennsylvania? The explanation goes back to 1912 when Alliance College was founded by its namesake, the Polish National Alliance of the United States of North America (P.N.A.), the largest of several Polish American life insurance fraternals of that time or of today. Each of the various ethnic fraternals supported its own educational or service organizations and the P.N.A. had decided at its 1903 convention to sponsor an academy and college for the children of its membership though all others were welcomed. A planning committee was organized and eventually Cambridge Springs, PA was selected where the once flourishing Rider Hotel was up for sale. The Rider was a huge, wooden Victorian wedding cake of a building that included almost 200 acres of land. Likewise, the once prosperous resort town was the center of a triangle with Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Buffalo as its points. Cambridge Springs also marked the railroad's halfway point between New York City and Chicago. Thus, the scene was set and on October 26, 1912 the twenty-seventh president of the United States himself, William Howard Taft, gave the dedication speech. Rider Hall, as it became known, served as the entire fabric of the college: its classrooms, dormitories, administrative offices, a museum and ... its library. By 1931 the library collection had grown to approximately 12,500 volumes with rare letters of George Washington to his two Polish generals included in the archives. On January 21 of

that year, however, fire gutted the entire, majestic building of six stories. Though none of its 230 occupants were lost, the library was a total loss.

A new campus was laid out and in 1941 Washington Hall was built, a graceful, neoclassic structure with the second floor devoted to the library. By 1971 the entire building was incorporated for library use, but for the origin of the "Polish Room" we must examine the year 1950.

ORIGIN OF THE POLISH ROOM

By 1950 the collection had rebuilt itself to 14,000 volumes. Within this parameter, however, were hundreds of books in the Polish language - a fact which a college accreditation team might frown upon we are told by Mrs. Marion Moore Coleman. Mrs. Coleman was the wife of the newly appointed president of Alliance and by her taking this bibliophobic-bull-by-the-horns, she was able to create a special collection out of what seemed a liability. She first found the west-end room on the second floor of Washington Hall more or less available for her project; moved what is estimated to be 4,000 volumes of Polish language books (and possibly books about Poland in English) from the overall library collection into it and then decorated the room with a number of Polish artifacts, including paintings, wall hangings, pottery, etc. The "Polish Room" was born! The catalog cards for these books were kept integrated in the public catalog but with the addition of a "P" above the Dewey Decimal call number for location purposes. It should be noted that not all of the books in the Polish Room had call numbers or were even cataloged per se. The uncataloged Polish items seem to have been arranged by subject area, however, so that a user could browse through them. The Polish Room had

humble, but honest beginnings. It also continually had a series of dedicated overseers who worked faithfully with the resources they had at hand.

PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL UNION CATALOG OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS AND, LATER, THE DECISION TO USE LC CLASSIFICATION AND SUBJECT HEADINGS FOR CATALOGING THE POLISH COLLECTION.

The library's willingness to share its Polish collection with a wider audience is shown in its agreement to participate in the National Union Catalog (NUC) of the Library of Congress (LC) as evidenced by a letter of acknowledgement dated August 10, 1953 to President Arthur P. Coleman (president 1950-1962) from the Chief Assistant Librarian of the Library of Congress. That letter stated, in part, "I acknowledge ... your letter of April 29, 1953 ... transmitting ... a duplicate set of cards representing the first portion cataloged of your valuable Polish Collection. We are very happy to have these cards for inclusion in the National Union Catalog ... so that the Polish Collection of Alliance College may be made available, through the National Union Catalog, to workers in the field of Polish studies throughout the United States."

The NUC allows for a unique holding code to be assigned by the LC to each member library - PCamA in the case of Alliance College. The member library participates by producing or ordering an extra catalog card for the books they process. They next place their assigned LC symbol on the bottom left-hand side of the card and then send it to the Library of Congress. If possible, a library would reproduce and send every shelflist or unit card they have in their special collections to the Library of Congress and thus register their entire holdings with the LC. This latter practice is not always possible due to the costs and time involved -- it is believed that the bulk of the Polish collection at Alliance is so

registered, though there have been gaps in reporting. Catalog cards from these participating libraries are then compared by the LC against their own holdings. If the item is found lacking from their LC collection the book is then considered unique and is so reproduced in the NUC which is, actually, a card catalog in book format. If one or more libraries own the same book, the reproduced (photographed) card includes each holding symbol as well. The NUC is thus a superb cataloging as well as interlibrary loan tool - a national bibliographic resource.

Alliance, however, still had problems in cataloging its Polish holdings. For example, in the 1958/1959 annual report of the library this statement was made: "I have sent out over 3,000 information cards to the Library of Congress ... in order to find out which books in our Polish Library had ever been catalogued ... It is very important to catalog these books and cataloguing will require preparing over 14,000 new cards." The object seems clear - the librarian wished help in cataloging the uncataloged portion of his collection. In effect, the cards sent to the LC, cataloged or not, could and probably were used to enrich the NUC. The problem of cataloging the Polish collection at Alliance -- as it is with many special collections at other libraries -- was always a challenge. In fact, the problem is discussed a number of times in later annual reports.

In 1961 the decision to recatalog the Polish collection according to LC classification and standards was made. That first year saw approximately 350 books so prepared with the number of overall volumes in the collection being 4,647.

Participation in the NUC linked with the full use of LC standards in cataloging, marked the vital point of departure for the Polish collection at Alliance College. From that time on the collection could grow

with a logical, well-defined structure. In fact, "growth" was the next target aimed for.

RELOCATION OF THE POLISH ROOM TO LARGER QUARTERS WITHIN THE LIBRARY.

The mid 1960's and early 1970's saw great increases in enrollment for Alliance College with a high of 629 students being recorded in 1968/1969. Two additional dormitories and a cafeteria/student union building were built in 1969. The reallocation of space allowed the library to double its capacity by acquiring the first floor of Washington Hall. This in turn allowed the Polish Room in October, 1971 to move from the west-end room of 25' x 43' to the east wing room of the second floor measuring 66' x 43'. Carpeting was added as were drapes, etc to make the spacious area a comfortable learning environment. The collection which had grown to 9,864 volumes by that time seemed somewhat "lost" in the steel shelving, but nature, it is said, abhors a vacuum - a preparation for things to come!

PERIOD OF RAPID GROWTH FOR THE POLISH COLLECTION DUE TO FEDERAL GRANTS IN SUPPORT OF THE COLLEGE'S YEAR ABROAD PROGRAM IN POLAND AND OF THE LIBRARY'S INDEPENDENT BOOK EXCHANGES WITH POLISH INSTITUTIONS.

Since the 1970/1971 academic year, Alliance College has sent a group of its students to study for a year abroad at the 600 year old Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland. The program enjoyed the support of the U. S. Office of Education via annual grant allocations for that purpose. Between 1973/74 and 1976/77 the grant allowed $5,000/year to be spent on library acquisitions in Poland in order to allow greater and more recent resources for Polish study majors at Alliance before and after their year abroad. Subject profiles were given to vendors in Poland for

collection development in the areas of Polish art, folk culture, history, music, philology, political science, university proceedings, etc, to be shipped as soon as published. It was especially important to receive newly published materials as soon as possible as many printings in Poland were and are so small that editions are quickly sold out. Specific, advance orders could also be placed using pre-publication book lists as well. Desiderata lists were likewise sent for out-of-print materials at second-hand book shops. Approximately 7,400 items were received due to the grant. Concurrently, an aggressive exchange program between several libraries and learned institutions in Poland was also pursued which added approximately 2,500 more items to the grand total.

With such large numbers of materials and the variety of vendors, a certain duplication of titles as well as a share of irrelevant titles were inevitable. Still, the library grew in a spectacular manner in relation to its size. The grants ended in 1977. The bulk of the private exchanges ended as well -- there were fewer and fewer items Alliance could afford to send to Poland as college funding suffered due to drastic losses in student enrollment - a fact beginning to be felt nationwide. It should be noted that during the growth period Alliance enjoyed the benefit of three visiting librarian consultants from Poland in March, 1970 and the academic years 1970/71 and 1974/75.

Due mainly to this almost 10,000 volume influx of grant and exchange books, plus the steady amount of gift books from the Polish-American community, there were some 4,391 volumes accessioned and awaiting cataloging as of June 30, 1982. With personnel cuts there also remained but a single professional librarian at Alliance who could pay even a token attention to the needs of the Polish Room - a not unusual situation during the collection's 32 year old history. There remained

for only the "greatest American computerized bibliographic hero" to arrive in time.

INTRODUCTION OF THE OCLC NETWORK FOR THE POLISH COLLECTION VIA FEDERAL/ STATE GRANTS. THE CATALOGING OF THE BACKLOG.

In January, 1981 it was learned from the State Library of Pennsylvania that federal funds under Title III of the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCR) were available to eligible libraries throughout the state. Allocated by the State Library, support was to be granted in four categories. The one of particular interest to Alliance was that to "encourage participation in the OCLC network."

A letter of intent was formulated at once by the head librarian which outlined the potential value of the OCLC cataloging subsystem to trim the 4,000 volume backlog of the Polish collection. In brief, the subsystem allows for the rapid cataloging of items already contained in the date base, plus the actual receipt of catalog cards within a week of order. The date base, it must be noted, contains the combined cataloging effort of several thousand libraries throughout the United States since the early 1970's including that of the Library of Congress. With what Alliance could contribute in original cataloging online and the fact that OCLC acts as a union catalog, mutual benefits to all were obvious. The State Librarian recognized this fact as well as can be read from his letter of July 10, 1981: "I am pleased to inform you that your LSCA Title III application for OCLC cataloging has been approved because of the uniqueness of the collection ..." The grant allowed for the purchase of a terminal and services for one year. Due to a legal problem between OCLC and its terminal supplier, however, Alliance did not receive its terminal and services until October, 1982. In any

case, between October 1982 and June 30, 1983 2,273 titles were searched and found or cataloged originally online with 15,344 OCLC catalog cards produced.

PROFILE OF THE POLISH COLLECTION.

As of June 30, 1983, the Polish Collection consisted of 14,125 cataloged titles (13,457 in circulation and 668 in reference). Not included in this figure are 4,112 added volumes such as annuals or parts of multi-volume sets (3,347 in circulation and 765 in reference). Also not included in the title count are 690 cataloged but duplicate copies of books in the circulation collection. Finally, a total of 2,475 books are accessioned, but uncataloged in two closed stack areas. These uncataloged books are listed in a separate card file and may be recovered by accession number. A grand total of the above gives 21,402 volumes.

The table below gives a numerical title breakdown of the entire collection vis a vis a simplified Library of Congress Classification table. The figures represent books processed and available on the shelves as of June 30, 1983.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CLASSIFICATION - SIMPLIFIED		TITLE COUNT to June, 1983
	Category	
A	General Works. Pology raphy	103
B	Philosophy. Psychology. Religion.	363
C	Auxiliary Sciences of History	130
D	History:	928
DK 401-443	Poland	1,305
445-973	Russia (Provinces)	98
4045-4122	Poland	113
4123-4409	To 1939	354
4410-4439	1939 - 1956	180
4440	1956 -	12
4600	Local Hist. & Description	334
4800	Local	31
E-F	History: America	243
E 184-185	Poles in America	86
G	Geog. Anthro. Rec. Folklore	271
H	Social Sciences	534
J-K	Political Science / Law	161
L	Education	183
M	Music	371
N	Fine Arts	311

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CLASSIFICATION - SIMPLIFIED		TITLE COUNT to June, 1983
	CATEGORY	
P	Language and Literature	930
PG 1-6000	Slavic	413
6001-6999	Polish	459
7000-7156	Polish Literature	783
7157	Individual authors A-Z Early to 18th century.	180
7158	19th to 20th centuries.	4,276
7159-7185	1961 --	243
7186	20th c. History & Crit.	74
PZ	Fiction and Juvenile Literature	57
Q	Science	167
R	Medicine	22
S	Agriculture	23
T	Technology	59
U-V	Military and Naval Science	61
Z	Bibliography & Library Science	267

14,125 Titles

THE PENNSYLVANIA UNION LIST OF SERIALS (PaULS), OCLC AND POLISH PERIODICALS IN THE ALLIANCE COLLEGE LIBRARY.

In addition to its sizable collection of Polish language monographs in the library, Alliance holds 203 current and retrospective periodical titles in Polish or in other languages about Polish topics. Most of these are from Poland though several hail from England, France, Italy and the United States.

Via an LSCR grant, the State Library of Pennsylvania funded their Pennsylvania Union List of Serials (PaULS) which is now available on-line via OCLC. The Alliance College Library serial list via its local library consortium, the Northwest Interlibrary Cooperative of Pennsylvania (NICOP), and its larger Pittsburgh Regional Library Center (PRLC) is now included in PaULS. Again, the reationale was to allow the special Polish collection of the Alliance College Library be known beyond its quiet environment in Cambridge Springs.

THE FUTURE.

As the Polish backlog is on its way to becoming eliminated, there is a need to again formulate an aggressive acquisition policy in Poland with an eye to public and private funding and exchanges. The need also remains for a full-time librarian for the Polish Room knowledgable of OCLC techniques. The librarian should take on the task of placing the entire collection online via a retrospective conversion project, i.e. reporting all the cataloged, non-OCLC items to the OCLC databank. The charge is minimal, though it would represent a real commitment in professional time. The project would also offer a prime opportunity for the cataloger to examine the collection's older and not altogether

correct or standardized cataloging, re-edit it for inclusion online and finally to order new cards. It goes without question that cataloging new acquisitions must be kept up with.

The only other item to be considered is an electronic security system for the Polish Room. The collection represents many rare items, of course, but in a sense, every item is a difficult to replace item, coming from across the seas as it does ...

Finally, Alliance must continue to attract scholars to its collections for research, especially during the summer months. The correct environment is there: pine forests, farmlands and ponds ... and a unique liberal arts college with its special collections.